Climate summit sees its first major protest

BELEM: Thousands of people marched through the streets of Belem on Saturday to press for action from negotiators holding tough talks at the UN's COP30 climate conference in the Amazonian city.

Under a baking sun, Indigenous people and activists gathered in a festive atmosphere, blasting music from speakers, carrying a giant Earth ball, and holding a flag of Brazil emblazoned with the words "Protected Amazon."

It was the first major protest outside the annual climate talks since COP26 four years ago in Glasgow, as the last three gatherings were held in locations with little tolerance for demonstrations — Egypt, Dubai, and Azerbaijan.

Branded the "Great People's March" by organisers, the Belem rally comes at the halfway point of contentious negotiations and follows two Indigenous-led protests that disrupted proceedings earlier in the week.

"Today we are witnessing a massacre as our forest is being destroyed," Benedito Huni Kuin, a 50-year-old member of the Huni Kuin Indigenous group from western Brazil, said.

"We want to make our voices heard from the Amazon and demand results," he said. "We need more Indigenous representatives at COP to defend our rights." Tyrone Scott, a 31-year-old Briton from the anti-poverty group War on Want, said it was an "Indigenous-led, movement-led, people-powered march." "It's just really exciting and a little bit of a nice antidote to the staleness and sterileness of the inside of the COP," Scott said.

Their demands include "reparations" for damage caused by corporations and governments, especially to marginalized communities.

Some also held a giant Palestinian flag and a "free Palestine" banner. One protester on stilts dressed as Uncle Sam denounced "imperialism." After a 4.5-kilometre (2.8-mile) march through the city, the demonstration was due to stop a few blocks from the COP30 venue, where authorities have deployed soldiers to protect the site.

On Tuesday, Indigenous protesters forced their way into the Parque da Cidade — the COP30 compound built on the site of a former airport — clashing with security personnel, some of whom sustained minor injuries.

Then on Friday, dozens of Indigenous protesters blocked the entrance for roughly two hours to spotlight their struggles in the Amazon, prompting high-level interventions to defuse the situation. —AFP

ACTIVISTS fancy-dressed as widows gesture during a skit on 'the death of fossil fuels' while taking part in a march on the sidelines of the COP30 UN Climate Change Conference in Belem, Brazil.—AFP

Lebanon to approach UN over walls built by Israel

BEIRUT: Lebanon will file a complaint to the United Nations Security Council against building of walls by Israel in south Lebanon, the Lebanese presidency said on Saturday.

The United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (Unifil) said on Friday that the Israeli army had built walls in south Lebanon near the UN-demarcated Blue Line, the de facto border.

When asked about the accusation, the Israeli military said "the wall does not cross the Blue Line".

President Joseph Aoun's office said he had instructed officials "to file an urgent complaint to the United Nations Security Council against Israel for constructing a concrete wall on Lebanon's southern border exceeding the Blue Line".

He requested that the complaint "be accompanied by reports issued by the United Nations refuting the Israeli denial of the wall's construction".

According to Unifil, last month peacekeepers surveyed a concrete T-wall erected by the Israeli army southwest of Yaroun and found that it "crossed the Blue Line, rendering more than 4,000 square metres of Lebanese territory inaccessible to the Lebanese people".

A survey this month of additional construction showed "a section of wall southeast of Yaroun also crossed the Blue Line", the statement added, calling it a violation of Lebanon's sovereignty.

The force said it had informed the Israeli army of the findings and requested it move the wall.

A ceasefire in November last year sought to end more than a year of hostilities, including two months of all-out conflict between Israel and Hezbollah.—AFP

UK train stabbings 'hero' discharged from hospital

LONDON: A British train worker hailed as a "hero" for stepping in to protect passengers during a mass stabbing two weeks ago was discharged from hospital on Saturday.

Samir Zitouni, 48, had been in a critical condition after suffering multiple injuries in the attack on a London-bound train on Nov 1.

"We are so grateful for the outpouring of support from the public, and very touched by all the kind words about Sam's brave actions on the night of the attack," his family said in a statement issued by British Transport Police.

"While we are really happy to have him home, he still has a significant recovery ahead and we would now like to be left in privacy to care for him as a family."

Zitouni was among 10 people wounded in the attack, which took place near Peterborough, eastern England.—AFP

China tells citizens to avoid Japan travel as Taiwan row grows

BEIJING: China has advised its citizens to avoid travelling to Japan, following a diplomatic feud sparked by remarks from Tokyo's new premier about a hypothetical attack on Taiwan.

Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi told parliament on Nov 7 that use of force against Taiwan could warrant a military response from Tokyo.

On Friday, Beijing said it had summoned Japan's ambassador, while Tokyo said it had summoned China's ambassador after an "inappropriate" and now-removed online post. Tokyo has since said its position on Taiwan, just 100 kilometres from the nearest Japanese island, is unchanged.

In an online post late on Friday, China's embassy in Japan warned its citizens against travelling to the country. "Recently, Japanese leaders have made blatantly provocative remarks regarding Taiwan, severely damaging the atmosphere for people-to-people exchanges," the *WeChat* post said.

The situation presents "significant risks to the personal safety and lives of Chinese citizens in Japan", it added.

"The ministry of foreign affairs and the Chinese embassy and consulates in Japan solemnly remind Chinese citizens to avoid travelling to Japan in the near future."

In a further development on Saturday, China's largest airlines offered full refunds for flights on Japan routes before the end of the year.

Air China, China Southern and China Eastern all published separate statements on the policies, which will allow ticket holders to refund or change Japan itineraries free of charge for flights from Saturday through Dec 31.

China and Japan are key trading partners, but historical mistrust and friction over territorial rivalries and military spending often test those ties.

Takaichi, a conservative and China hawk, has toned down her rhetoric since assuming office last month. But just weeks into her administration, the neighbours are at odds.

Addressing parliament on Nov 7, Takaichi said that an armed attack on Taiwan could warrant sending troops to the island under "collective self-defence".

If an emergency in Taiwan entails "battleships and the use of force, then that could constitute a situation threatening the survival (of Japan), any way you slice it", she said. Security legislation passed in 2015 allows Japan to exercise the right to "collective self-defence" under certain conditions, including if there was a clear danger to the country's survival.

Strategic ambiguity

Despite the escalating diplomatic spat, Takaichi has indicated she has no intention of retracting her statement and insisted it was consistent with Tokyo's long-standing policy.

But she said she would refrain from referring to specific scenarios in the future.

Previous Japanese prime ministers have avoided commenting directly on Taiwan's defence, choosing instead to maintain "strategic ambiguity".

The United States has also long been deliberately ambiguous on whether it would deploy its military to defend Taiwan.

The most recent row escalated last weekend when the Chinese consul general in Osaka, Xue Jian, posted about "(cutting) off that dirty neck", apparently referring to Takaichi.—AFP

China, Russia may not veto Gaza resolution tomorrow

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governance structures. The US has clarified that no American troops will be deployed in the force.

In a strong show of regional support, eight Arab and Muslim countries, including Pakistan, Qatar, Egypt, UAE, Saudi Arabia, Indonesia, Jordan and Turkey, signed a joint statement this week, endorsing the US draft and called for its swift passage. The United States also joined the statement. According to the diplomats, this backing reflects deep concern over a resurgence of violence.

Asked why Muslim states supported the US resolution, one diplomat said, "Nobody wants the Palestinian genocide to resume."

At the UN, the Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine, Riyad Mansour, met Pakistan's ambassador to the UN Asim Iftikhar Ahmad and concurred that "blood-letting in Gaza must stop immediately." The Palestinian mission is believed to have endorsed the Arab-Muslim group's support for the US text.

The draft envisions a Board of Peace to administer Gaza during the transition, but this has drawn sharp criticism. Russia and China have pressed to remove the board entirely.

The ISF would work on "permanent decommissioning of weapons" from non-state armed groups, including Hamas, a particularly sensitive point.

As the force "establishes control and stability," the draft requires an Israeli military withdrawal from Gaza tied to agreed "standards, milestones and timeframes" negotiated among Israel, the stabilisation force, the US, and others.

In response to criticism, the US draft was modified to emphasise "a credible pathway to Palestinian self-determination and statehood," but only conditionally, after "faithful" reforms to the Palestinian Authority and progress in Gaza redevelopment.

Some Arab and possible troop-contributing countries have also raised concerns about how the Board of Peace will be composed, who will lead it, and what role (if any) the Palestinian Authority (PA) will have.

Opposing draft from Russia

Moscow has responded by tabling a rival draft that removes the Board of Peace and instead asks the UN Secretary-General to propose options for stabilisation and governance. In its submission, Russia argues that the US draft falls short of "universally recognized international legal standards," notably the long-standing two-state framework. The alternative text seeks a more inclusively negotiated international force under clearer UN oversight.

The Trump administration, however, is pressing Council members hard to adopt the resolution. US Secretary of State Marco Rubio has publicly defended the proposal, calling it "the best path to peace in the Middle East" and thanking the Arab and Muslim countries endorsing the resolution.

Despite optimism from US diplomats, the resolution faces serious hurdles as there is still no guarantee about veto; the UAE though in close talks publicly stated it sees "no clear framework" for the force and has not committed to sending troops; besides legitimacy concerns for the Board of Peace especially if the Palestinian Authority is sidelined; ambiguity over logistics and funding, and humanitarian urgency.

Iran's first woman orchestra conductor stirs big dreams

TEHRAN: When Paniz Faryoussefi mounts the podium and reaches for her baton, she represents more than just the hope of a thrilling orchestral performance.

The eyes turned towards her in Tehran's renowned Vahdat Hall include those of many young women musicians inspired by her taking her place as Iran's first woman philharmonic conductor.

Women's professional and cultural lives are still heavily restricted in Iran, particularly in terms of public performance before mixed-gender audiences.

Women, for example, are not allowed to sing solo in front of men.

But, as exemplified by 42-year-old Faryoussefi, they can now conduct an orchestra. "When I stepped onto the stage, I noticed that all eyes were on a woman conducting the orchestra, and I felt an immense responsibility," she said after the performance.

In some Iranian cities, women musicians are not allowed to perform on stage, and even in the capital Tehran they cannot raise their voices in song in public.

Faryoussefi was born into an artistic family and her mother dreamed of her becoming a cheffe d'orchestre, but Iranian performing arts academies do not teach conducting.

She briefly attended classes in Armenia before returning to build a trailblazing career.

Dream taking root "Young women need to persevere and follow their dreams," she said.

At the podium, she led the 50-strong orchestra through works by Austria's Franz Schubert, Finland's Jean Sibelius and Soviet-Armenian composer Aram Khachaturian.

"I hope this marks a new era for young Iranian women and that they will understand that... they should not be afraid," she said. "It is the only gateway to emancipation.

"A friend saw a little girl in the audience mimicking my movements. He thought a dream was already taking root in her, that she was thinking she too could one day achieve the same thing." —AFP

Tribute to WWI hero raises 'revisionist' storm in France

VERDUN: A French official said on Saturday he would take legal action over comments made following a tribute to Philippe Petain, France's wartime head of state convicted of treason after World War II.

The row is the latest controversy over the legacy of Petain, a World War I hero disgraced for his collaboration with the Nazis during the 1940s.

Xavier Delarue, the prefect of Meuse department in eastern France, said he would take action over comments made following a mass for Petain organised by an association dedicated to restoring his reputation.

Interior Minister Laurent Nunez also condemned the comments.

The Association to Defend the Memory of Marshal Petain (ADMP) organised a mass on Saturday at the church of Saint-Jean-Baptiste in Verdun, where Petain won a famous WWI battle in 1916.

Around 20 association members attended, while outside about 100 people, watched by police, gathered to protest the ceremony.

After the mass, ADMP president Jacques Boncompain told journalists that Petain had been "the first resistant of France".

Delarue, the prefect, while announcing his legal action said the comments had been "clearly revisionist".

Interior Minister Nunez, in a post on *X*, said: "The remarks made today on the sidelines of a mass in `tribute' to Philippe Petain in Verdun go against our collective memory."

The minister condemned any attempt to rehabilitate someone linked to WWII collaboration and oppression.

Verdun's mayor, Samuel Hazard, had tried to ban the pro-Petain ceremony, but was overruled by an administrative court ruling on Friday.—AFP

Another judge quits over 27th Amendment

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Constitution, to also resign, adding that the legal community would respect them for such a move. The association also announced a strike for Monday, saying lawyers would completely boycott court proceedings after hearings of urgent cases.

Petitions against 27th Amendment

Separately, a petition challenging the 27th Amendment to the Constitution has been filed in the LHC, asking the court to set it aside by declaring it unconstitutional.

The petitioners, lawyers Munir Ahmad and Mian Shabbir Ismail, moved the court through Advocate Azhar Siddique, arguing that the amendment conflicts with the basic structure and spirit of the 1973 Constitution.

They contend that the Supreme Court's original jurisdiction has been abolished and that the Federal Constitutional Court (FCC) has been placed above it.

The petition says there is a fear that the status of the Supreme Court will be weakened and judicial independence compromised following the amendment.

The petition alleges that the amendment has distorted the country's 60-year judicial history and tradition. It maintains that a federal constitutional court was never part of the original constitutional scheme.

The petition further argues that the current National Assembly is not a true constituent assembly and therefore lacks the authority to introduce such major constitutional changes. The amendment, it says, runs counter to Islamic provisions, judicial independence and fundamental rights.

The petitioners state that legal notices were served on the president, prime minister, Senate chairman and National Assembly speaker before approaching the court, but the amendment was nevertheless approved.

The Constitution, it argues, is a social contract and cannot be altered without public consent. "No detailed debate took place in parliament, nor was a transparent legislative process adopted," the petition insists, alleging that the 27th Amendment was "passed in the darkness of night" without any national-level open debate with lawyers, civil society, journalists or other stakeholders.

In a separate plea, a citizen, Hassan Latif, has again filed a petition against the 27th Amendment. He had earlier withdrawn his petition after the court deemed it premature as the amendment had not yet received presidential assent.

The fresh petition contends that radical changes introduced by the amendment contradict the preamble to the Constitution and are aimed at curtailing the powers of the Supreme Court.

Justice Chaudhry Muhammad Iqbal is scheduled to take up both petitions on Monday.

Justice Agha takes FCC oath

Amid rumours about possible resignations at the Islamabad High Court (IHC), another judge of the FCC, Justice K.K. Agha, took oath at the IHC building on Saturday.

In what officials described as a significant step towards operationalising the newly established court, Justice Agha was sworn in by FCC Chief Justice Aminuddin Khan at a ceremony held in the IHC's conference room.

The event was noticeably low-key compared to Friday's oath-taking of three FCC judges, with a smaller turnout in the relatively congested venue.

Those who attended the event included FCC judges Justice Syed Hasan Azhar Rizvi, Justice Aamer Farooq and Justice Ali Baqar Najafi. IHC Chief Justice Sardar Muhammad Sarfraz Dogar, along with IHC Justices Arbab Muhammad Tahir, Khadim Hussain Soomro, Muhammad Azam Khan, Muhammad Asif and Raja Inaam Ameen Minhas, also participated.

Advocate General Islamabad Ayyaz Shaukat, Islamabad High Court Bar Association President Syed Wajid Ali Shah Gilani, Secretary Manzoor Ahmed Jaja, senior lawyers, judicial officers and other court staff were also present.

Notably, several IHC judges — including Justices Mohsin Akhtar Kayani, Babar Sattar, Tariq Mehmood Jahangiri, Sardar Ejaz Ishaq Khan and Saman Rafat Imtiaz — stayed away from the ceremony. They had also boycotted Friday's FCC oath-taking, and their continued absence has drawn attention in legal circles amid ongoing administrative changes linked to the new court.

Speculation about possible resignations by IHC judges swirled throughout Saturday. Rumours that Justice Sardar Ejaz Ishaq Khan had resigned circulated widely on social media and WhatsApp groups, including those with senior IHC officials.

However, Justice Ejaz Ishaq's staff denied the reports. Sources said the speculation began after the judge asked the librarian to separate books he had brought from home. Some insiders claimed a couple of resignations from the IHC could be expected by the end of next month.

Key appointments within the FCC have also been made. Retired sessions judge Hafeez Khan has been appointed registrar, while Mazhar Bhatti has been named secretary to the chief justice.

Sources said former additional registrar Nazar Hussain — who had faced contempt proceedings before a bench led by Justice Mansoor Ali Shah for not fixing a case related to the jurisdiction of benches — has also been attached to the FCC secretariat.

Sources added that the FCC is expected to begin hearing a small number of cases from Monday, for which benches have already been constituted.

Meanwhile, the IHC administration has allocated seven courtrooms to the FCC within the high court premises. The offices of the advocate general and attorney general have been vacated and cleared to facilitate the new court's operations.

As part of the reorganisation, the process of vacating Courtroom No. 2 — currently used by senior puisne judge Justice Mohsin Akhtar Kayani — is in progress.

Justice Kayani is expected to be shifted to the courtroom of Justice Miangul Hassan Aurangzeb, while FCC Chief Justice Aminuddin Khan will move into Justice Kayani's present courtroom once the relocation is completed.

Sources said the remaining two FCC judges are scheduled to take the oath on Monday (tomorrow).